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ABSTRACT

A survey was made of parental expectations of secular and religious teachers at a Jewish day school in a large metropolitan area located in the Ohio Valley. The school, with a student population of 108 students, employs 6 secular and 4 religious teachers. A high response rate (61 percent) was received from the parents. Findings indicated that there was a high degree of agreement among parents concerning their expectations of teachers in the school. Of major concern was that teachers be well-trained and hold a college degree, be concerned with the individual student, and be capable of using a variety of teaching styles and techniques. There was a feeling among parents that all teachers should be able to relate subject matter content to the ethical aspects of religion. There was also high agreement that secular teachers stress reading, math, science, and social studies in the curriculum. The most important curriculum area to be stressed by religious teachers was "Bible," followed by tradition and culture and Hebrew. A description is given of the demography of the study and the format of the survey questionnaire. Tables present information on specific responses to questionnaire items. (JD)

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PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS OF TEACHERS IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL

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Paper presented at the 1983 Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educatators, Orlando, FL, Feb. 2, 1983.

Much has been written and researched about specific parental expectations of teachers and schools in the public sector (Alles and Eddy, 1980; Frechtling, et al., 1981; Gallup, 1982; Waterhouse, 1980). Parents are concerned about many teacher-originated or teacher-controlled activities, such as: discipline in the classroom, understanding the learner, creating interest in the learner, concerns about values, subject matter content, better teacher-parent relationships, teacher competencies in subject matter as well as in methodologies, use of drugs, teacher's lack of interest, etc. The list of concerns is quite extensive--however, some of the concerns, such as use of drugs and values (usually religious), are generally beyond the control of the average classroom teacher; in spite of whether a classroom teacher has control over a situation/environment, parents still look towards the teacher as the individual with the greatest amount of influence and effect in the school. Consequently, teachers must be sensitive of parental expectations--whether they be realistic or not.

Teachers in the private sector are not only confronted with the general expectations of parents, similar to those described above, but they are confronted with a special set of issues as a result of teaching in private schools. Often the parental concerns are a function of the unique student population in attendance (Dillman, 1981; Kapel, 1972, Morrill, Getz, and Kurshan, 1980; Rupp, 1980), e.g.: religious values, foreign language (such as English-as-a Second Language, Hebrew, Vietnamese), special curriculum, homogeneous school population.

In the private school sector, parents often have greater direct influence on teachers than would generally be found in public schools because of the structure of public schools and their funding and support base. Private school teachers must be aware of parental expectations, and they must be

sensitive to parental messages that convey such expectations. When a private school is composed of two distinct teaching staffs (secular staff, religious staff) with two distinct curricula, then it is important that each teacher be cognizant of what parents expect of the total staff, the religious staff, and the secular staff. Mis-conceptions of what parents expect can cause considerable problems for teachers, students, the administration of the school, and the parents themselves. Misunderstandings between the two teaching staffs can be created through "mixed messages: given by parents. Success and/or retention in the school could be at stake for new teachers. And as the job-market for teachers continues to decline, individuals entering teaching must consider many and varied teaching opportunities in the private domain; small religious schools, that offer secular programs, are definitely a viable option. This particular study focused on a small (student population of 108) Jewish dayschool, one of over 360 such schools in North America serving over 70,000 children. There are ten (10) secular and four (4) religious teachers in the school. The ten secular teachers provide a state accredited K-8 elementary and middle school curriculum. The first study focused on the more general "special set of issues" facing the teachers, in this unique religious educational institution, as opposed to the more specific parental expectations (e.g. discipline, drugs, etc.) of teachers in other schools, whether they be public or private. A second follow-up study will focus on more specific parental expectations.

Procedures

A six-page instrument was developed to survey parental expectations of secular and religious teachers at a Jewish day school in a large metropolitan area located in the Ohio Valley. The instrument was divided into five sections: I. Introduction; II. Demographic Data that solicited from the parents information concerning the sex of the parent responding, the age category of the parent, and the number of years that the parent had been affiliated with the educational institution through his/her child, the sex of the child, the grade of the child; III. statements (33 in number) which required the respondent to indicate the degree of agreement they had with a particular statement (a Likert Scale was used, 1 = "I strongly disagree", 2 = "I disagree", 3 = "I neither agree nor disagree (neutral)", 4 = "I agree", 5 = "I strongly agree", and X = "I have no opinion"; section IV required respondents to list the four most important subject areas that should be stressed by secular teachers and then to list the four most important subject matter areas that should be stressed by religious teachers; section V contained a listing of 49 adjectives, with the respondents listing the three adjectives that best described the ideal secular teacher and then the ideal religious teacher. Next, respondents were requested to list the three adjectives that best describe most of the secular teachers at the institution and the three adjectives that best describe most of the religious teachers. Each instrument was to be filled out anonymously, and at no time were the respondents asked to identify either themselves or their child by name.

Of the 33 items found in Section III of the instrument, 18 of the items referred to all teachers at the institution, six referred to secular teachers, and nine referred to religious teachers. Several of the items were contradictory in nature--that is, one item asked whether the respondents agreed to the

statement that all teachers should focus primarily on subject matter, another item asked respondents to indicate their degree of agreement to the statement that all teachers should stress primarily the social and emotional development of children, while a third item asked respondents to give their opinion as to whether all teachers should give equal time to the development of subject matter and the social-emotional development of children. Within the items that dealt specifically with religious or secular teachers, there were several common items. For example, respondents were asked whether they agreed that religious teachers should have prior teaching experience; they were also asked whether secular teachers should have prior teaching experience. One item inquired as to whether or not the respondent felt that religious teachers should be knowledgeable about the secular program; another item asked whether secular teachers should be knowledgeable about religious practices and the religious curriculum. (Please refer to Tables 3, 4, 5 for a listing of particular items found in Section III.)

The instrument was sent to all of the parents who had children at the dayschool. Each parent received one instrument per child; thus if a parent had three children in the school, then he/she would receive three separate instruments. The researchers were interested in determining whether or not there would be any differences among parents as a function of the level (grade) that the children attended. The instrument was sent to the parents on October 29th with an enclosed self-addressed envelope. They were asked to return the completed instrument to the school by November 20th. Again, in the cover letter that was sent, parents were told that no child or parent would be identified and that the purpose of this evaluation was to focus on teacher in-service.

By November 20th, the researchers received 66 returned instruments. This amounted to 61.1% of the total number of instruments (108) that were sent out--one for each child. Since the instrument was written in English and required a high degree of understanding of the English language, as well as the fact that most parents wrote extensively on the instrument (expressing additional views), it was easy to deduce that only one or two non-English speaking parents responded. There are nineteen children in the school who come from non-English speaking homes. Thus, the response rate was in reality much higher because of the inability of non-English speaking parents to respond to the instrument. The response rate based only on English speaking parents was 74.2%. (Please refer to Table 1 for the distribution and percentages of responses by grade and Table 2 for the response rate by grade level.) The one noticeable exception to the high response rate is grade 3. The researchers could not explain why there was such a low response (35.3% or 42.9%). Over-all, the response rates were sufficiently high (based either on total population or on English speaking parents) for the results to be inferred to the total parental population of the school.

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Insert Table 1 and 2 about here
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Results and Findings

The items in Section III that were directed at all teachers are found in Table 3, items specifically for religious teachers in Table 4, and items for secular teachers in Table 5. It is apparent from the means reported in Table 3 (statements concerning all teachers) that there is a higher degree of agreement with the statements among parents whose children are in grades K-5 than those whose children are in 6-8. Again, the scale is as follows: 1 = strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3 = neutral (neither agree nor disagree); 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree. It appears that the parents feel that all teachers in the school should hold a college degree. They agree that all

teachers should be active members of parent-teacher groups. In addition, they agree that all teachers should be involved in curriculum decision-making, should stress subject matter and social and emotional development, and that they should use ability grouping within the classes, as well as individualizing instruction. They also believe that teachers should use a variety of teaching techniques in the classroom. There is not strong support (neutral to disagree) for all teachers to participate in recruiting, fund raising, communicating with parents on a weekly basis, being involved in extra-curricular activities, and allowing open classroom visitation from parents. It is interesting to note that there is a feeling among parents that all teachers should be able to relate subject matter content to the ethical aspects of religion (however, this item did not generate as high mean scores among respondents as did several of the other items).

It should be noted that on six items (1, 4, 7, 10, 11, 17) both levels-- K-5 and 6-8, means were 4.0 and above. And conversely, there were five items (2, 3, 13, 15, 16) that generated mean values of 3.50 and below at both levels.

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Insert Table 3 about here

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Parents felt that religious teachers should have some college work reflecting methods and instruction in the elementary classroom (item 3, Table 4), and that they, the teachers, should be knowledgeable about the secular curriculum (item 1, Table 4). They also felt that religious teachers should have prior teaching experience. Parents did not feel that religious teachers should be expected to visit children in the home, nor should the teachers periodically invite students into their homes for shabbat meals (items 6 and 9). Parents appeared to be fairly neutral about religious teachers being active in the Jewish community and about their following traditional Judaism in their personal practices. Parents were also neutral about religious teachers being actively

involved in the secular curriculum and providing tutoring for students before and after school.

Parents tended to agree less with items that were specifically for religious teachers than they did with items that covered all teachers. Only two items (Table 4) generated means of 4.0 and above, whereas four items generated means below 3.00. The reader should note, however, that expectations of all teachers subsumes the expectations that parents have of religious teachers.

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Insert Table 4 about here
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Parents did agree with the statement that secular teachers should have teaching experience (item 3, Table 5). Parents did not believe that secular teachers should be expected to visit homes before the start of the school year. Parents were not particularly supportive of the statement that secular teachers should be involved in the creation of the religious curriculum. However, parents were relatively supportive of the statement that secular teachers should be knowledgeable about the religious practices and the religious curriculum (item 1). Parents were also relatively supportive of the fact that they believe secular teachers should be working towards, or should have, a master's degree in elementary education.

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Insert Table 5 about here
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There is a high degree of agreement among all of the parents (regardless of grade level) as to the curriculum areas that should be stressed by secular teachers--refer to Table 6. Reading, math, science, and social studies are the four areas that were most commonly listed by parents; with reading being the most important, followed by math and science, and then finally social studies.

Although there was common agreement among parents concerning the four areas that should be stressed by religious teachers, the rank order of these were not the same for parents of children from K-5 as opposed to parents with children from 6-8 (Table 7). There is no question that "Bible" is considered the most important curriculum area to be stressed by religious teachers. Tradition/culture was the second most important to be stressed for the K-5 group, while it was the third most important for the 6-8 group. Hebrew was the third most important for parents of children from K-5, whereas Hebrew was the fourth most important curriculum area to be stressed according to 6-8 parents.

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Insert Tables 6 and 7 about here
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Adjectives that best describe the ideal secular and religious teachers, as well as adjectives that best describe most of the secular and religious teachers at the institution, are found in Tables 8 through 11. It is evident that parents at both levels selected positive adjectives that described the ideal secular and religious teacher. In addition, adjectives that dealt with the understanding of subject matter (knowledgeable) and with enthusiasm and creativity were selected. These same adjectives were also used to describe most of the secular and religious teachers who were employed at the school. Only one negative adjective did appear on the list of most commonly selected descriptors. The adjective was "rigid" and was one of two of the third most selected adjectives describing religious teachers of grades 6-8. Given that there were 15 adjectives in the list of 49 that could be construed as negative, it is apparent that the parents did select positive adjectives to describe both sets of teachers employed at the school.

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Insert Tables 8-11 about here
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The researchers wanted to assess whether or not the responses of parents were a function of grade level (A), sex of parent (B), age of parent (C), or the sex of the child (D). To do this, a four-way analysis of variance was performed. Although there were no significant main effects (A, B, C, D), or interactions, there were several items that did generate relatively wide differences of opinion among parents (means of 2.00 or greater). Items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, and 16 of Table 3, Item 4 on Table 4, and Items 1, 3, and 6 on Table 5 did generate wide mean differences, e.g. fathers over 40 with boys responded differently from 20-39 year old mothers who had boys. In spite of these differences, there was a high degree of agreement among parents with relationship to the items listed on the instrument regardless of the grades their children attended.

Discussion

It is apparent from the data that the parents believe all teachers should minimally hold a college degree. They also believe that all teachers should use a variety of teaching techniques, including individualized instruction, and should be mindful of individual differences among children. They are concerned that the teachers be well prepared. It is clear that the parents are also concerned that teachers should have prior teaching experience before employment at the school. They want teachers to be knowledgeable about the curriculum of their counterparts in the school. However, they are not concerned about secular teachers developing religious curricula and vice versa. There is no question that parents have very limited expectations for the teachers in the school to recruit and raise funds. They also appear to have limited expectations with relationship to teachers visiting homes or interacting with parents and/or children after the school day. There is an apparent differentiation, in the minds of parents, between the religious and secular programs.

There is no question that parents know exactly what they want teachers to stress as far as general curriculum areas are concerned. Reading and mathematics are the two major areas that they want teachers to be concerned with in the secular program. It is also interesting to note that, although Hebrew is important and should be an area to be stressed by religious teachers, Hebrew is clearly not the most important religious curriculum area. Bible and tradition/culture are more important to the parents than is Hebrew. Without doubt, the teachers in the school, regardless of subject taught, are well received by the parents and viewed in a very positive light.

The study indicates that there is a high degree of agreement among parents concerning their expectations of teachers in the school. There is no question that the parents want well-trained and educated teachers who are concerned with the individual student and who use a variety of teaching styles and techniques to meet the needs of each student. It is also clear that parents are willing to put limitations on their expectations of their children's teachers. They see teachers as being only involved in that aspect of the school which is related to instructing and interacting directly with children during the school day. The sex of either the parent or child did not play a significant role in the responses. Fathers and mothers had similar expectations of teachers; there appeared to be no distinction between the expectations of parents who have boys and those who have girls. Although there were slight differences between levels (K-5, 6-8), these differences were not statistically significant and, therefore, should be considered to be at the chance level. The data from this study suggests that teachers in this particular school are meeting the desired needs of the children as indicated by parental responses. Nevertheless, presently employed teachers must be cognizant of the fact that parents do expect them to meet the individual needs of their children by using a variety of teaching techniques. Parents also have the high expectation that the teachers in the

school will be well-trained and and will continue to keep abreast of new teaching techniques. This expectation is true for teachers in both the secular and the religious programs.

A follow-up of this study will focus on parental expectations of more specific teacher-oriented or teacher-controlled activities. Results of both studies should provide necessary and important information for the teachers in the school.

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Table 1 Response Rate by Individual Grade

Grades	Number Returned	Percent of Total Population	Percent of English-Speaking Parents**
K	5	50.0	62.5
1	9	69.2	90.0
2	12	75.0	80.0
3	6	35.3	42.9
4 } * 5 }	12*	60.0*	85.7*
6	7	58.3	77.8
7	6	75.0	75.0
8	9	75.0	81.8
Total	66	61.1	74.2

* Combined grade

** Out of the total number (108) of children, there are 19 children who came from non-English speaking families. Given the nature of the instrument used, it could be deduced that only one or two non-English speaking parents responded.

Table 2 Response Rate by Grade Level

Grade	Number Returned	Percent of Total Population	Percent of English-Speaking Parents
K - 5	44	57.9	72.1
6 - 8	22	68.8	78.6

Table 3: Parental Expectations of ALL Teachers

ITEM	GRADE LEVEL MEANS			ITEM	GRADE LEVEL MEANS		
	Total K-5 N = 44	Total 6-8 N = 22	Grand Total K-8 N = 66		Total K-5 N = 44	Total 6-8 N = 22	Grant Total K-8 N = 66
1. All our teachers should hold a college degree.	4.85	4.48	4.72	7. Subject matter (e.g. math, reading,etc.) should be the primary focus of all our teachers.	4.02	4.00	3.83
2. All our teachers should be expected to participate in recruitment.	2.92	3,00	3.00	8. All our teachers should stress primarily the social and emotional development of children.	3.62	3.74	3.67
3. All our teachers should be expected to participate in fund raising.	2.72	2.72	2.72	9. All our teachers should strive to assure that all the children complete grade level material regardless of ability (e.g. Gr. 3 mat[illegible]).	3.24	3.52	3.34
4. All our teachers should be active members of the parent-teachers' group.	4.25	4.00	4.16	10. All our teachers should use ability grouping within the class.	4.17	4.04	4.20
5. All our teachers should be willing to accept phone calls from parents at home.	3.77	3.33	3.67	11. All our teachers should use individualized instruction.	4.20	4.50	4.31
6. All our teachers should be involved in curriculum decision-making.	4.32	3.74	4.11	12. All our teachers should give equal time to the development of subject matter and the social and emotional development of the child.	4,02	3.81	3.95

Table 3: Parental Expectations of ALL Teachers (continued)

ITEM	GRADE LEVEL MEANS		
	Total K-5 N = 44	Total 6-8 N = 22	Grand Total (K-8) N = 66
13. All our teachers should communicate directly with each parent on a weekly basis.	3.25	2.95	3.15
14. All our teachers should be willing to conference with parents after school hours (e.g. evening).	4.12	2.82	4.02
15. All our teachers should be involved with an extra-curricular activity (ex. clubs, newspapers).	3.05	3.41	3.17
16. All our teachers should allow open classroom visitation from parents.	3.39	3.32	3.36
17. All teachers should use a variety of teaching techniques in the classroom.	4.50	4.32	4.43
18. All teachers should be able to relate subject matter content to the ethical aspects of Judaism.	3.52	3.91	3.66

Table 4: Parental Expectations of RELIGIOUS Teachers

ITEMS	GRADE LEVEL MEANS		
	Total K-5 N = 44	Total 6-8 N = 22	Grant Total K-8 N = 66
1. Our religious teachers should be knowledgeable about the secular curriculum.	4.00	4.04	4.02
2. Our religious teachers should be actively involved in the development of the secular curriculum.	2.62	2.81	2.69
3. Religious teachers should have some college work reflecting methods of instruction in the elementary classroom.	4.29	4.23	4.27
4. Religious teachers should have prior teaching experience.	3.95	4.04	3.98
5. Our religious teachers should be willing to provide tutoring for students before and after school as part of the school curriculum when needed.	2.95	3.04	2.98
6. Religious teachers are expected to visit each child at home before the start of the school year.	2.17	2.04	2.13
7. Religious teachers should be active in the Jewish Community.	3.28	3.43	3.33
8. Religious teachers should follow traditional Judaism in their personal practices.	3.12	3.38	3.21
9. Religious teachers should periodically invite students to their homes for Shabbat meals, etc.	2.54	2.36	2.47

Table 5: Parental Expectations of SECULAR Teachers

ITEMS	GRADE LEVEL MEANS		
	Total K-5 N = 44	Total 6-8 N = 22	Grand Total K-8 N = 66
1. Our secular teachers should be knowledgeable about the religious practices and the religious curriculum.	3.80	3.81	3.81
2. Our secular teachers should be involved in the creation of the religious curriculum.	2.55	2.50	2.53
3. Secular teachers should have prior teaching experience.	4.10	4.19	4.13
4. Secular teachers should have or be working toward a master's degree in elementary education.	3.88	3.71	3.82
5. Our secular teachers should be willing to provide tutoring for students before and after school as part of the school curriculum when needed.	2.95	3.04	2.98
6. Secular teachers are expected to visit each child at home before the start of the school year.	2.24	2.04	2.17

Table 6: Curriculum Areas That Should Be Stressed by Secular Teachers

Grade Levels	K-5	6-8	Total (K-8)
	1. Reading	1. Reading	1. Reading
	2. Math	2. Math	2. Math
	3. Science	3. Science	3. Science
	4. Social Studies	4. Social Studies	4. Social Studies

Table 7: Curriculum Areas That Should be Stressed By Religious Teachers

Grade Levels	K-5	6-8	Total (K-8)
	1. Bible	1. Bible	1. Bible
	2. Tradition/Culture (Custom, Holidays)	2. Jewish History (Israel)	2. Tradition/Culture (Custom, Holidays)
	3. Hebrew	3. Tradition/Culture	3. Hebrew
	4. Jewish History (Israel)	4. Hebrew	4. Jewish History

Table 8: Adjectives That Best Describe the Ideal Secular Teacher

Grade Level	K-5	6-8	Total (K-8)
	1. enthusiastic, creative	1. creative	1. creative
	2. knowledgeable, competent	2. competent	2. enthusiastic, competent
	3. concerned	3. enthusiastic	3. knowledgeable

Table 9: Adjectives That Best Describe the Ideal Religious Teacher

Grade Level	K-5	6-8	Total (K-8)
	1. knowledgeable	1. competent	1. knowledgeable
	2. enthusiastic	2. knowledgeable	2. competent
	3. competent	3. enthusiastic, creative	3. enthusiastic

Table 10: Adjectives That Best Describe Most of the Secular Teachers

Grade Level	K-5	6-8	Total (K-8)
	1. concerned	1. knowledgeable	1. knowledgeable
	2. capable	2. competent	2. concerned
	3. knowledgeable	3. capable, enthusiastic, concerned	3. capable

Table 11: Adjectives That Best Describe Most of the Religious Teachers

Grade Level	K-5	6-8	Total (k-8)
	1. knowledgeable	1. knowledgeable	1. knowledgeable
	2. concerned	2. friendly, capable	2. concerned
	3. enthusiastic	3. competent, rigid	3. enthusiastic, friendly, capable